

Executive Summary for the Pacific Northwest Recreation Resource Advisory Committee

Site: Whitewater Trailhead
Site Type: Standard Amenity
Proposed Action: New Fee Site
Recommended Fees: Recreation Passes are honored or \$5/day at the site

Site Description

Whitewater Trailhead is located off of Highway 22, about 68 miles east of Salem, Oregon on the Detroit Ranger District, Willamette National Forest. It is within a 1 to 2 hour drive of the Willamette Valley and Portland Metropolitan areas. The trail provides access to the Mt. Jefferson Wilderness and Jefferson Park, a sensitive sub-alpine meadow with several lakes and Mt. Jefferson as a majestic backdrop. Because Mt. Jefferson is close to population centers and the Whitewater Trail is a relatively short hike, the area is commonly used for day trips. Whitewater trailhead is one of four high use trails that enter the Mt. Jefferson Wilderness. The other three trailheads are currently in the fee program. The more popular trailheads have a higher level of amenities and trail maintenance. Thirteen trailheads that access the west side of Mt. Jefferson Wilderness remain fee free, including three other trails that reach Jefferson Park.

Fee Assessment

This site was previously in the fee demonstration program but was eliminated with the enactment of REA. Since then, amenities continue to be added to accommodate visitor needs and use at this popular site, and to deal with human waste issues. A new toilet was installed in 2006, and benches and garbage service are provided. Picnic tables and an interpretive sign about the sensitive Jefferson Park alpine ecosystem will be installed at the trailhead prior to implementing a fee.

A standard amenity day use fee would honor Recreation Passes (Northwest Forest Pass, Interagency Passes and Golden Passports). A self-service fee tube will allow visitors without passes to purchase a \$5 pass onsite. The fee would help recoup the cost of operating and maintaining the facilities at the trailhead and trail maintenance. The Northwest Forest Pass program helps maintain these trailheads with higher amenities. Indirectly it helps to offset costs in the overall recreation program so that services and facilities can be provided at other sites including those with no fees. Volunteers and partnerships are an integral component of the recreation/trail program, but do not entirely sustain these programs without the help of other funding strategies.

Public Involvement

Public involvement to add Whitewater Trailhead to the fee program has been conducted over the last year and included: notices posted onsite, at the Detroit Ranger District visitor information office and on the Willamette NF Website, a notice published in the Federal Register and a news release that resulted in two newspaper articles. Federal legislators were also briefed.

No public comments were received. The public was accustomed to having a recreation pass at this site up until 2004 and had a high compliance rate.